

## **Lydia's Conversion**

### **Acts 16:11-15**

- I. Let us form a clear and distinct idea of Lydia.
  1. Every woman introduced in the Scriptures to any extent is in some way remarkable-- either for her virtues or her vices.
  2. Of Thyatira, in Asia minor, 10,000, Turks and Arabs. Philippi 300 miles away.
  3. Engaged in selling purple cloth. Most cost dye, never applied to cheap goods.
    - a. She was not engaged in a cheap business. Widow? Her father's business?
  4. What about effects of business relations in a heathen land? She worshipped God! A devout woman of the Greeks or of Jewish stock unknown.
  5. The Sabbath day unknown except among the Jews. Lydia had closed shop when competition probably kept their open.
  6. In the text at a place of prayer-- on the bank of a stream that flows by the wall of the city. Doubtless under shade of overhanging trees.
    - a. This must have been the custom of that group of women.
    - b. Lydia faithful even when among strangers. LESSON.
    - c. If people could wear the invisible coat which Jack the Giant Killer sometime wore, (or the ring that belonged to the HOBBIT) it might surprise us to see how people act when away from home.
- II. **The Heart of Lydia Opened.** (This is a figurative expression)
  1. The heart is compared to something that is closed up, narrow, contracted.
  2. Suppose we had in the congregation a man noted for his stinginess.
    - a. Suddenly, after the telling of a powerful missionary need this brother who usually only puts a nickel in the offering plate threw in a fifty dollar bill.
    - b. You would say "he has opened his heart." That heart small and constricted-- had been opened.
  3. Keeping this in mind and knowing what the reaction was of Jews to the Christian faith, we're not at loss to find the trouble with Lydia's heart.
    - a. The prevailing theory of the day among the Jews and proselytes was that the Messiah would be nothing more than an earthly Jewish King.
    - b. Looking for a deliver like one of the Judges-- who would deliver them from foreign oppression.
    - c. They thought highest honor would be to be a Jew. They had a selfish, narrow national feeling when they thought of the Messiah. Christ crucified became a stumbling block.
    - d. That small, narrow heart had to be opened up-- she welcomed the Savior who died for her salvation.
  4. Let's make sure we understand the order of the events here and the effect when Lydia opened her heart.

- a. The first statement about Lydia is that she "heard us" She gave attention to what was preached by Paul.
- b. The second statement is that "the Lord opened her heart." And the word for "opened" is to "open thoroughly, completely open"
  - 1) The power was not in the preacher--but the power of the gospel message in the heart-- it opens up the heart.
- c. The third statement is that she "gave heed to the things that were spoken of Paul."
  - 1) Certain things appointed for her to do-- she gave heed-- believed, repented.
  - 2) The text says "when she was baptized she entreated us to come into her house."
  - 3) She gave practical attention to her duties-- did what she could.
  - 4) The simple story of a good woman's conversion.

### III. The Question Might Be Raised,

Why did she need to make a change at all?

Would she not have gone to heaven if she had died as she was?

Perhaps would if Christ had not come and died.

Now she needed to hear the gospel, Acts 4:12, believe it and obey it.

### IV. Not through with Lydia-- See how the Lord worked to open her heart by bring a praying Lydia and the preacher together.

1. Previous Examples:
  - a. Remember in the case of the Ethiopian Treasurer's conversion that the preacher Philip was directed by an angel to go down to the Gaza road. (Acts 8)
  - b. And in the conversion of Cornelius the Centurion, in Acts 10, an angel appeared to the "pray-er" and informed him to send for Simon Peter.
  - c. Here we see another lesson about the way Lord worked to bring Lydia and the preacher together.
2. Here aided with hindsight in the case of Lydia, we can see the working of God's providence in opening her heart.
3. Observe-- while Lydia was going out from Sabbath to Sabbath praying on the bank of the river, there was not a preacher of the gospel on the continent of Europe in which she lived.
  - a. Not one who was able to tell the story of Christ, within 100s of miles of where she lived.
  - b. If God directly intervened to open the heart of a lost person, without the preaching of the gospel-- surely he would have on this occasion. But see how God works to open her heart through the preaching of the gospel.
4. The text clearly reveals to us a deliberately laid out method that God pursued, in order to reach the heart of that woman, let us trace it in the Scriptures.

5. It was a beautiful sight to God and his angels to see this faithful woman meeting Sabbath after Sabbath. They wanted to worship God-- to be found acceptable to Him.
  - a. The Lord begins working to bring a preacher there. Paul, Silas, and Timothy on the Asian continent at the time. Geographical passages seem dry-- but contain some precious truths.
  - b. Paul had finished his work of revisiting churches in Phrygia and Galatia and wanted to preach in the district then called Asia (Ephesus), but the Holy Spirit dwelling with these inspired men said No. (Remember that Silas was a prophet as well.)
  - c. Then the men thought they would go into Bithyia-- but the spirit wouldn't allow them to go there.
  - d. So finishing the word behind-- not allowed to go left or right-- they went straight ahead-- they came to the district of Mysia, and at Troas they stopped on the shore of the Aegean Sea. As far as they could go without a ship. If they took a ship-- where among all the seas should they go?
  - e. We can see God working in all of this-- as he heard the prayers of these women over on the bank of that river.
  - f. IN bed that night Paul has a vision-- He seems to see across the sea on the shore of Macedonia a man beckoning to him and calling out, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."
    - 1) Next morning Paul tells us vision to Luke. "Straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia." well chosen words. Because ships were not that calling at Troas. Then they were not always going in the direction you wanted to go. Athens, Corinth, Ephesus.
    - 2) We can see them going to the wharf where there was a ship-- can you imagine them calling out like you or I would?
      - a) "Where is this vessel bound?" "To Macedonia"
      - b) "Can we get passage?" "Yes"
      - c) "When will she sail?" "Today, come aboard"
    - 3) Soon the vessel weights its anchor and out to sea. And we see another amazing truth. We should never overlook a single word when studying the Bible.
      - a) "We made a straight course to Samotrache." You can't make a straight course in sailing unless you have a favorable wind. Otherwise you have to tack.
      - b) In 20th chapter when they said back -- took 5 days. But they ran it in 2. Not only was the wind favorable but it was blowing a stiff breeze.
    - 4) Can imagine the two preachers in the open sea, seated under the over-hanging awning enjoying the cool breeze, having a conversation some what like this--
      - a) "What good luck we had today. Found a vessel in the harbor, found it was sailing where we wanted to go. We found they had room aboard for us, and now in the open sea, see how favorable the wind blows, and see how the sails swell and how good the vessel plows through the water.
      - b) "We will soon be there-- what good luck! "
      - c) We can plainly see, and Luke saw it afterwards-- the hand which holds the winds and guides the paths of the sea was working through his providence to

get those preachers to Macedonia-- and to answer the prayers of those women.

- d) He was working for the opening of Lydia's heart.
- 5) Landed on the shore of Macedonia-- little village of Neapolis-- "new city". About 10 times inland was the famous city of Philippi, rendered famous by a great battle which decided the fate of the Roman Empire.
  - a) Immediately they begin to walk toward that city. We don't see the Lord overruling them any more, but leaves them to find their own way.
  - b) They learn of the place of prayer on the bank of the river Gangas.
- 6) The wonderful news of a glorified Redeemer, who was slain, buried, but was not sitting on the throne of David given to him by his Father. He is ruling over heaven and earth, for he is the head of the church, the King and his Kingdom.
  - a) The women hear this splendid news!
  - b) Their hearts are open and they receive it-- They respond to its demand upon them-- they are baptized for the remission of sins-- The Lord adds them as citizens of his Kingdom -- what a glorious day!!
- 7) I wonder if God ever does anything like this for you and me! The Word of God can prick the heart with the love of God-- But God working through his providence brings the lost and the preacher together for the occasion of proclamation of good tidings.
  - a) God's providence may not be seen nor recognized except in hindsight.
  - b) As a Christian can't you look back and see God's blessing in your life-- I see him blessing me with a Bible Teacher that was able to reach me. I see him blessing me with a dear wife-- that the best thing in this world for me.
  - c) Perhaps the Lord has placed the events in your life to bring you here this morning to obey the gospel's call.
  - d) I beg you in Jesus' name to hesitate no longer, but to let your heart fly wide open, and take in all the precious love and blessings of God and Christ.
  - e) Obey him with a true heart as He gives you this opportunity.